

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

**CSUMB Founding Faculty
Oral History Project 1995-98
Rina Benmayor, Project Director**

**Interview with Angie Ngoc Tran, Professor, Global Studies
School of Social, Behavioral and Global Studies
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Interviewer, Rina Benmayor, Professor Emerita
School of Humanities and Communication
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Narrator: Angie Ngoc Tran
Interviewer: Rina Benmayor

1 **Benmayor:** Today is November 1, 2019. I'm Rina Benmayor. And I'm here interviewing Angie
2 Tran for the Founding Faculty Oral History Project. Angie, do we have your permission to record this
3 interview?

4 **Tran:** Yes, absolutely.

5 **Benmayor:** Okay, thank you. So let's start. Angie, could tell us briefly about your background and
6 where you came from before you came to CSUMB? Where you studied?

7 **Tran:** First of all I just want to thank you very much, Rina, for including me in this very
8 meaningful project. I really appreciate having this opportunity to reflect on my twenty-odd years here, so
9 it's really a wonderful opportunity to contribute to this wonderful, wonderful project. So yeah, time flies!
10 Twenty three years! I could not believe it! It's really amazing that way back in 1996, I was basically fresh
11 out of graduate school. Actually at that time I was just finishing my dissertation. I passed it. My first
12 semester at CSUMB I was ABD [all but dissertation]. I was waiting for my doctoral degree to be official. I
13 basically got my master's degree at USC, University of Southern California. But before that I was a product
14 of CSU system. I was a graduate from CSU Long Beach.

15 **Benmayor:** Oh, I didn't know that.

16 **Tran:** Yeah. It's really a wonderful thing, sort of like going back to another campus to be of
17 service to the CSU system. So it's like a full circle. I got a bachelor's degree in Computer Management
18 Systems at CSU Long Beach. Went to work for a couple of years. Military build-up. So I was sort of like a
19 database administrator at Rockwell International. Then after a while I thought to myself that I cannot be a
20 person behind a computer all day long. My mind at that point was really already gearing towards the

developmental processes in Viet Nam, where I came from. Politically we could not do much to change the system in Viet Nam. But I was thinking that economically we can effect some changes that can improve the lives of people in Viet Nam.

[3:01] So that was the passion for me to go back to graduate school. When the Vietnamese government started to open the country economically. So I went back to graduate school. I went to USC because at that point it had a very interesting master's degree program on Developmental Economics. Fit my bill perfectly! So I quit Rockwell. I went back to USC full time. At that point the goal was to get the master's degree in Developmental Economics. So while I was there, I got to know a very, very interesting interdisciplinary program, doctoral program, in Political Economy and Public Policy. And the acronym is PEPP. So the head of the program was a Marxian, so I was very happy [Chuckles]. I got into that program and I got a TA-ship [teaching assistant] that helped out with the tuition. You know, USC is not cheap! And this is very important, the CSU Doctoral Incentive Program. I was able to get that too, which was really fantastic, to help me with the expensive tuition. Between that grant and the TA-ship at USC, I think, six or seven years later I got my Ph.D. The field work was done in Viet Nam, looking at the issue of developmental economics. Looking at the issue of Viet Nam as a developmental state. To what extent can the Vietnamese state use trade policy, economic policy to develop the country. That was just launching into my current passion and desire in learning everything I can get my hands on about labor issues. So labor issues is my passion. Labor resistance. Labor relations. Gendered division of labor, you name it. At that point, I got two interviews at CSUMB.

Benmayor: Can we back up a minute?

Tran: Sure.

Benmayor: How did you find out about the position at CSUMB and what caused you to want to apply?

44 **Tran:** Okay. Good prompt. Of course, fresh off graduate school at that time, I was searching
45 everywhere, everywhere that I could find. I remember even applying for a university up in Alaska or North
46 Dakota. I said, “Oh, my God!” I was kind of desperate. [Chuckles] I was searching. I opened my eyes and
47 ears 360 degrees. And then I saw this ad [from CSUMB]. At that point it was a Global Studies ad. I looked
48 at the Vision Statement and I fell in love with it. I mean this is not just lip service. I looked at the Vision
49 Statement dated back to 1994. It was about two years after that, that I got the interview. I was looking at
50 that and I really loved this. At that point it was a really brand-new campus.

51 **[6:26]** And I’m just looking at it [the Vision Statement] now and saying what brought me to this campus?
52 Five things jump out of the page for me that I feel still resonated with me very, very powerfully. The first
53 one is the “commitment to multilingual, multicultural and gender equitable learning.” For me, coming from
54 Viet Nam ... Vietnamese is my mother tongue, obviously. English is my second language. I’m comfortable
55 with English now. Now when I dream I dream in both languages. [Laughs] And, I am taking Spanish 101
56 this semester so I’m adding a third language! So that multilingual, multicultural and *gender* equitable
57 learning scores big time in me. It’s a very, very important commitment and that resonates with me deeply.
58 Deeply. And the second point that I really love is that this University promises to be “a collaborative
59 intellectual community, distinguished by partnerships with both public and private institutions.” Now let
60 me pause here a little bit. Collaborative and intellectual also are very big on my agenda because I
61 understand the CSU campuses focus on teaching. Yes, we are primarily a teaching institution. But I loved
62 the fact that CSUMB focused also on scholarship. That is big on my agenda. Because for me, a good
63 teacher has to also be a good researcher. The two things go hand in hand. I cannot operate with one – one
64 without the other. Therefore, seeing that this campus promised a collaborative intellectual community, oh,
65 my gosh! Music to my ears! [Laughs] So those were two things. When I looked down further, because this
66 document is really a fantastic document, written twenty-five years ago, right? I look at the education
67 programs. Three things stuck out to me. One is the recognition of the importance of global

interdependence. As you can see, by definition I am already a transnational migrant. I continue to be one. I'm a transnational citizen. When I look at that, "Wow." Global interdependence! I fell in love immediately. This is the place for me because I can see *myself* in this place. And then, invest in languages and cross-cultural competence. Wonderful.

The third point in the educational programs that also resonated very well with me is the emphasis on topics "most central to the local area's economy, ecology and California's long-term needs." This one really led to the longest running colloquium series that I co-founded with Gerald Shenk. He FERP'ed – sorry, he retired now completely. But from the get-go, we were in the same cohort. We were hired at the same time and we immediately talked to each other and talked about founding that colloquium that exactly addresses that very point. What are the topics significant in this local area? And that has connection to [10:03] history. That brings me to the fourth point. The fourth point is that "this campus will link the past, present and future by responding to the historical and changing conditions." To me, coming from a very war-torn country, it is so meaningful to me to be at a place that respects history. And of course, we all know that we are in a very historic place, former Fort Ord. So the combined factors really made me think that if I can work here wow! I can excel and I can contribute. So to make a long story short, those are the reasons why I was attracted to this campus. I got two interviews. First with Global Studies. And then SBS, Social and Behavioral Sciences interview the second. They made the offer. And the rest is history. [Laughs]

Benmayor: That's wonderful. I am so happy, Angie, that you took the time to go through the Vision Statement because it really establishes the connections and makes very specific how you saw yourself represented in it. So thank you for that. What was the title of the colloquium that you and Gerald founded?

Tran: It is [the] Social Justice Colloquium Series. We founded it in 1996. The first one took place in 1997. I just printed out the list of the titles, just the titles of these colloquia. My gosh! So this year we are on to the twenty fourth one! The twenty fourth one! So this is the longest running colloquia series on

campus. The general name is Social Justice Colloquium Series. But every year we pick a topic that is current. That is topical. That is urgent. That is burning in our existence. The topics range broadly from everything having to do with social justice. From gender, labor, environment, education, housing, the arts, science. This year, as a sneak peek, it's going to be on trauma.

Benmayor: Ooh!

Tran: Trauma, yes. Trauma.

Benmayor: Great. We won't go into that right now. But, it is the longest running organized colloquium on campus, and it's really lovely. Congratulations to you for that.

Tran: Well, thank you., I cannot get all of the credit by myself because the organizational structure of this colloquium series is very decentralized, very flat. Very, very flat. So while Gerald and I were the two co-founders, every year we have the key faculty lead. We led the first couple of years. But then after that, depending on the passion and the topic of the day, Dan Fernandez was the lead on environmental issues. Some folks from Liberal Studies led on educational issues. Last year was on film. Someone else did the leading. So we are very, very flat. Very, very democratic. And we allow faculty who have the passion to lead, and we support.

Benmayor: So that really expresses the collaborative spirit of CSUMB.

Tran: Yes, yes, yes!

[13:54] Benmayor: So Angie, when you first came for your interviews what did you see? What was your impression?

Tran: [Laughs] Okay. My goodness! You know, this is funny because when I went inside Building 18. . . . You can date me because I call the buildings by the numbers, not by name. I think you can relate to that. Because that's how I remember. I was interviewed in Building 18 which is now the Psychology Building. The Psychology Building. I remember vividly, I went into what is now the west wing. It's now the west wing in the Psychology Building. But there were compartments. What do you call those?

116 **Benmayor:** Cubicles?

117 **Tran:** Cubicles! Yes, cubicles. I was interviewed in one of those cubicles. Yes, yes. I did my
118 presentation there in one of those cubicles. They put up the screen so I could have my PowerPoint there. I
119 basically did my dissertation because it was fresh in my mind. I was confident then. That was the first
120 impression. Cubicles in Building 18.

121 **Benmayor:** [Laughs]

122 **Tran:** Yes. And the cubicles were orange, as I recall. The fabric was orange. I was on the quad
123 because Building 18 is there. But I was taken around the campus. And oh, my goodness! Boarded houses.
124 The look and feel totally of a former Fort Ord base. The look and feel.

125 **Benmayor:** Were you shocked?

126 **Tran:** Shocked? No. I think I came prepared because I read up the history of that place. Sand. I
127 mean brown, brown, brown everywhere. A lot of open space. Lots of wildlife when I was walking around.
128 Squirrels. Raccoons. Snakes.

129 **Benmayor:** [Laughs]

130 **Tran:** My fear, my phobia. Birds, all kinds of birds. Oh, wild turkeys! Wild turkeys.

131 **Benmayor:** Yes. [Laughs]

132 **Tran:** Yes, yes, yes. So yes, wildlife. Clear air. Clean air. No traffic. Next to no traffic. Love it.

133 **Benmayor:** So you were hired then in Social and Behavioral Sciences rather than in Global
134 Studies, is that correct?

135 **Tran:** That's correct.

136 **Benmayor:** So what was your first job description? What were your responsibilities?

137 **Tran:** So SBS, for short, had at that point five or six concentrations. I was hired as a Political
138 Economist in SBS. SBS has these five or six concentrations approved by the Chancellor's Office. I was
139 assigned to develop the concentration, which I did. I recall that back then, I was helping the SBS faculty to

140 work on the CPEC document [California Postsecondary Education Commission]. I forgot the full name of
141 that, but that was very important documentation to justify the curricular structure of SBS and the six
142 [17:33] concentrations. So I remember vividly that Gerald and I, because we both loved writing, we
143 clicked. So we worked together totally on our own time. At night. Over the weekend. We poured over that
144 report. Lots of mistakes. Lots of mistakes. So we corrected all of those mistakes, we corrected the writing
145 and we submitted it and it got approved.

146 **Benmayor:** Right.

147 **Tran:** We were super, super proud of that first project. I recall, I think I was the only woman,
148 female faculty in SBS, at the time. Later on they hired more. Or, they had more Lecturers. But at the time I
149 was the only female.

150 **Benmayor:** How was that?

151 **Tran:** It was tough. It was tough. [Laughs] It was tough. For me, fresh off graduate school, you
152 know. At USC, I was trained to be a good political economist, as a scholar. But I wasn't trained to be a
153 teacher. Well, I learned to teach as a TA [teaching assistant]. Yes, as a TA. So I learned how to do that.
154 Graded. And holding some discussion sessions. But not a class by myself. Therefore, teaching at CSUMB
155 and teaching these new classes the first couple of semesters were really a huge challenge. Also being a
156 female faculty, that was a challenge as well. So I have to give Gerald Shenk credit for supporting me,
157 training me as a teacher, because we co-taught the Viet Nam class from the get go. If I became a not-so-
158 bad teacher, [it's] thanks to Gerald. [Laughs] If I'm a bad one? Well, blame Gerald! [Laughter] Just
159 kidding. Just kidding! But it was a fantastic collaboration between us and also Yong Lao was also part of
160 our cohort. So we had three young faculty then joining SBS. And we really supported each other, so I have
161 to also count Yong Lao, too. But I co-taught with Gerald Shenk, so that was a very direct collaboration
162 there.

163 **Benmayor:** Did you also teach across the curriculum? In the Lower Division courses? Students
164 that were not in Social and Behavioral Science?

165 **Tran:** Yes. Yes. At that point, I'm sure you remember this, we had ULRs, right? University
166 Learning Requirements [CSUMB's general education requirements}. I'm not confused with URL. I know
167 that it's ULR. [Laughs]. [Unintelligible] Because of the attention to the ULR system, our classes were
168 blessed with having all the majors joining our classes. So we had a lot of students from HCOM [Human
169 Communication], from the Humanities and from Science taking our classes. So yes indeed, we did serve
170 students across majors. The ULR system was something that Gerald and I were really working side by side,
171 [21:11] to help shape the ULRs then. We were sort of, you would say, activists back then. We participated
172 in all of the [committees] – as many as humanly possible. For me at that time, learning how to teach,
173 learning to be a professor for the first time by myself, and also being an activist on the [Faculty] Senate
174 floor. So it was like -- oh, my gosh--, a very tall order. But I couldn't understand, somehow, I pulled
175 through all of those without any course release. Zero. No course release. No, nothing. So all these activities
176 were done at night or over the weekend.

177 **Benmayor:** So you experienced the work load issue.

178 **Tran:** Totally. Totally, yeah. I'm very happy that brand new tenure track faculty these days have
179 the full one year --I think two years, right?-- one course release per semester which I think is fantastic. I am
180 very happy for them. And that, I have to attribute to CFA. That's the fight they won for us.

181 **Benmayor:** And CFA is...?

182 **Tran:** CFA is California Faculty Association. Our union.

183 **Benmayor:** You spoke very eloquently about the Vision and the things that resonated for you.
184 How did you see yourself enacting the Vision? In your classes and your activism?

185 **Tran:** I love the Vision. I looked at it this morning and it still resonates with me. I like to walk that
186 talk. That's a very important message to convey to you and to contribute to this project, is that it is a living

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187 statement. Yes, it's wonderful to read. But I think it's even more important to live it. To walk it. Not just
188 talk. Talk is cheap. So we need to walk this talk. And actually actualize it, do it, implement it. So the
189 collaboration with students -- and this is one more thing that I really love about this Vision Statement, is the
190 "learning and teaching one another in an atmosphere of mutual respect and pursuit of excellence." I meant
191 it. I really walked this talk. It's not just lip service. Because when I teach my classes, I listen to my
192 students. The way I structure my classes is that yes, I share my knowledge because I study a lot, I'm
193 reading a lot, I'm still studying, so I share with the students what I've learned. But then I turn the table
194 around to them. I invite them to share their knowledge. Because they come to my classes with existing
195 knowledge. The epistemology that I value is not just through reading or studying at school. But it's also
196 much more broad-based. Experiential learning is what I love. So I encourage them. I credit them -- I give
197 them credits for sharing with the class their knowledge. Their backgrounds. That makes the class more fun.
198 More dynamic. More active. It's not just me standing up there onstage, but students also stand up there and
199 share with us their knowledge. So the idea of teaching and learning from each other is very big in my
200 classes. That's my very important teaching pedagogy, teaching philosophy. So that's one way to live this
201 [24:52] Vision Statement. The second way to actualize it, to make it alive, is to continue on with the
202 Colloquium series. To make relevant burning issues of the day. Locally and globally. To make global
203 interdependence alive. And also bringing in collaboration from across the campus. Linking past and
204 present. So I'm trying to integrate all of those in this colloquium series, which I am very proud to say, it's
205 wonderful. And everyone knows it. Which is wonderful. Local communities know it, too. I remember
206 Gerald Shenk and I, we really wanted to break down the wall between "town and gown" so to speak, by
207 inviting the communities to this campus. Many times they served on the panels. Community members
208 served on the panel because, such as the issue of energy, I recall some of the years back we had energy
209 crisis in California. Duke Energy Company, some problems with that. So we invited experts. External
210 experts come to the campus and community members. So energy issues. Housing issues. I'm very proud to

211 say that when I look at these topics back in the '90's we already talked about the housing crisis in
212 Monterey, and look where we are now. Housing is still a big, burning issue. So that colloquium series
213 really helped – has been helping me and this campus to implement many, many elements of the Founding
214 Vision together.

215 **Benmayor:** Um hum. So you made reference to the difficulty that you as a young Assistant
216 Professor had. You had many things to learn and you came to a campus that was starting up and didn't
217 have a great number of resources so we worked very long hours, very hard hours. Can you talk about that
218 work environment in relation to the issue of creativity?

219 **Tran:** Okay. Yes, I will respond to that. One thing I want to add to the previous question. I just
220 now remember, how to implement the Vision Statement. The thing about scholarship. The thing about
221 intellectual community. So I am very proud to say that at different levels I want to make it live, I want to
222 make it real. So, first at a personal level, since teaching here 23 years ago, I've published three books, one
223 co-edited volume with another colleague (2004) and two solo books published by academic university
224 presses, major university presses. [Written addendum: Also, I have presented my scholarly works at
225 conferences worldwide regularly, received several fellowships, and been a co-investigator on a comparative
226 study on *Corporate Social Responsibility and Competitiveness for SMEs in Developing Countries: South*
227 *Africa and Vietnam* (2012)].

228 **Benmayor:** Bravo.

229 **Tran:** *Ties that Bind* in 2013 published by Cornell University Press, chronicling over 100 years of
230 labor resistance in movements. And this upcoming book [*Ethnic Dissent and Empowerment*] to be
231 published by University of Illinois Press next year [2020]. It is going to be about ethnic resistance, ethnic
232 dissent and empowerment.

233 **Benmayor:** Are those books both in the context of Viet Nam or globally?

234 **[28:41] Tran:** The first two are, yes. But the third one, yes, also Viet Nam but it kind of shows you the
235 development, the transformation of me as a teacher, as a scholar and looking at transnational labor
236 migration. So it's not just Viet Nam. And it's not just one ethnic group. It's five ethnic groups. So I'm
237 looking at the intersectionality analysis of five different ethnic groups migrating from Viet Nam to
238 Malaysia and then returning [to Viet Nam]. So I am looking at their lives and their **precarity** and their
239 trials and tribulations in circular migration patterns. It is transcending borders, international borders as
240 well. It's not just in Viet Nam. So that's sort of my transformation coming from just everything with Viet
241 Nam, to something beyond that, to the connections. To the interdependence across national borders. The
242 ongoing project right now that I'm working is on H2A Visa guest workers from Mexico to the U.S. and
243 return.

244 **Benmayor:** Oh, wow.

245 **Tran:** That's why I'm learning Spanish.

246 **Benmayor:** [Laughs]

247 **Tran:** [Laughs] Thank you. Thank you. So those things are at the personal level. I mean this project
248 I'm in collaboration with Lorenzo Covarrubias because he's a fantastic scholar and I love working with
249 him so it's a wonderful collaboration. So I'm also reaching out. Across the departmental level is the Brown
250 Bag Series to share scholarship. The idea started last academic year in SBGS. So, we did some back then,
251 already. And this year moving forward in this wonderful new building. So when we started doing this
252 again, the Dean's Office approached us saying that, "Oh, hey, why don't we do it college wide?" I said,
253 "Fantastic." You know, it has always been open to everyone but since the Dean made that suggestion and
254 gave support for that, of course we whole heartedly welcomed that. The thing that we are about to go to at
255 noon is part of this whole idea of keeping alive scholarship. Everywhere I go, all of the panels on which I
256 presented, everywhere I went to globally, I'm making a statement that, "See, I am teaching at this primarily
257 teaching institution but yet I am still producing. I'm still contributing scholarship to the field."

258 **Benmayor:** That's fantastic. So, that ties into the whole issue of creativity. How did you manage to
259 produce at least the first two books in that climate of intense work?

260 **[31:43] Tran:** Yes. Good question. You know, in reflecting on answering this question I want to be honest
261 about this. So for the listeners, for the readers in the future they can learn from this reflection and pick and
262 choose what would work for them. I think that at the beginning it's self-exploitation. It's still is to some
263 extent. I don't say that in a sense of complaining. I'm saying that, and I'm fully accountable to my actions
264 because I love doing this. It is my passion. I'm not complaining. However, I think that if, for faculty who
265 are passionate about both teaching and doing scholarship, they should get more support. They shouldn't
266 have to exploit themselves to do this. Overnight. Over the weekend. Over my summers, too. Which had
267 been what I have been doing. I have been doing that because full teaching load, then when would be the
268 time to do it? The weekend. So I had no weekends. I had no weekends. I did it just because I love, I'm
269 passionate about these topics. I love shedding light on workers' plight and how to improve their lives and
270 living and working conditions. So that's what I did. Because during the week all the time was absorbed in
271 teaching, office hours, grading and doing activist work. Right? On the Senate floor. And also in the union. I
272 was Secretary in CFA for many years. Yeah. So then activism also, you know, was part of my passion.
273 Weekends are the only time to focus on research. So yes.

274 **Benmayor:** It's amazing you have the energy to do it on the weekend. [Chuckles]

275 **Tran:** You know, the second thing that I would like to contribute here is that maintaining good
276 health is very important. It's very important. Yes, I exploit myself because I love doing these things but I'm
277 also am very keen on doing exercises. I love walking. I love swimming. [Chuckles] It is so important to
278 make time for exercises to take care of one's self. If you are not healthy then you cannot do any of the
279 above. So I think that self-care is very important. So that's another message I would like to convey. Self-
280 care, and do what your heart tells you to do, and have fun along the way. If you don't have fun then you
281 cannot sustain. I think that the love of the arts and good films, foreign films and documentaries, my partner

282 and I are very keen on going to museums and seeing international documentaries. We learned so much
283 from documentaries. And music. We both love classical music. So yeah, the arts.

284 **Benmayor:** And you are a classical pianist, are you not?

285 **Tran:** I cannot claim myself to be a pianist. Oh, please~ I'm not, I'm not! But I do read music and
286 I do play and in my retirement I will go back to classical music. That's my love. Yeah.

287 **[35:20] Benmayor:** So I want to take you back to those early years, the first three years that you were on
288 the campus, did you presence or did you participate in any of the struggles that took place on campus?
289 What do you remember?

290 **Tran:** Yes, yes, yes, yes. So Gerald Shenk and I, like I mentioned, we were activists. So we were
291 **unintelligible** and I recall the ULR struggle. I don't remember the details but I remember working with
292 Gerald Shenk on the structure for ULRs on the campus. What would be the key elements in the ULR
293 structure? I remember sitting in what now is the Dining Commons. It's still called Dining Commons.
294 We're sitting there, we have our papers all over the map on the table and trying to classify, trying to
295 categorize how to structure these ULR's focusing on skill sets, methodologies and content. What drives
296 what? So we were struggling with that. What would be the rationale to structure the ULR's? I remember
297 vividly working closely with Gerald on the ULR, the curricular structure for the whole campus. And that
298 was before the sort of – as I recall – 2009 was kind of a watershed year, if you will. When we have external
299 consultants coming to campus and talking about GE, right?

300 **Benmayor:** General Education.

301 **Tran:** General Education. So that was another set of, wave of campus meetings. Town hall
302 meetings. A lot of Town Hall meetings about the university requirements. So there was that move from
303 ULR to the GE, right? I remember participating in that as well. Yes. A lot of struggle there as I recall.
304 Because it seemed to me that [sigh] this campus has a very beautiful Vision Statement and at the beginning
305 the focus was not on the units. The focus was on learning outcomes. So we had these learning outcomes to

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306 be achieved in these classes. I think that along the lines the push from on high on this supposed to be
307 creative, innovative campus to be standardized. Standardization comes to my mind about the GE system.
308 So I think that we were under pressure and we have been under pressure. We are under pressure right now
309 [38:38] to become just like another CSU campus. I just submitted the curricular changes for GS, Global
310 Studies. I joined GS five years ago. The university is **now** looking at student success as graduating on time
311 meaning that they have to graduate with 120 units. That's the so-called native student pathways. And then
312 the transfer pathway is 60 units of pathway. So the point I am trying to make here is the force, the pressure
313 to graduate students on time strikes me as, well has left a lot to be desired, I think. Where do we have time
314 for critical thinking? Where do we have time for the kind of collaborative learning which takes time to do,
315 right? If we want to have group work, letting students talk, letting students share knowledge rather than me
316 standing up there and talking, takes time. It could be very easy for me to deliver a lecture. I have all of
317 those things written. I have all the PowerPoints. But it's not good for learning. It's not for learning. Studies
318 have shown that it's not good for learning for professors to lecture them all the time. So my concern is that
319 the move towards standardization, graduating on time, seems to be driven by neoliberal ideology.
320 [Chuckles] Graduating these students on time. If one would say, using Marxist language here, they're
321 outputs. They're outputs. If you think of the University as the assembly line then we have to produce these
322 outputs fast, efficient, on time. So it – pardon that metaphor – but it seems to me that's one of the
323 shortcomings, of the train, the pathway that we are now doing. It's economically driven. And it's that kind
324 of neoliberal ideology driven. And I have some concerns about that.

325 **Benmayor:** I was going to ask you earlier on to – you had really eloquently laid out five points of
326 the Vision that you found were so important. My question was and now how is. . .? I don't want you to go
327 through those five points but I think you've just spoken very eloquently to what has happened, the
328 transformation that has taken place.

329 **Tran:** Yes.

330 **Benmayor:** In the Vision. So we've been talking for quite a while. I think we should wrap up. I
331 wanted to ask you first about – first of all about major disappointments and then major accomplishments
332 and what you are most proud of.

333 **[41:56] Tran:** Sure. I think that I've touched on all of those throughout our conversation. I think I am very
334 proud to be still kicking and still being very active on campus. At all levels. In the classroom. Right now I
335 am GS Coordinator. Global Studies Coordinator. So I don't have time to serve on the Senate floor. But
336 when I'm done with this Coordinatorship I would love to return to the Senate floor because I think that is
337 the most important forum on campus. That's where I can interchange with my colleagues from different
338 majors. With administrators and with student representatives as well. And with staff. So it is a fantastic
339 forum to be in. So I'm very proud to be active in all facets of life in this community. I live on campus, you
340 know that. So I am very happy to be totally immersed. If you call for immersion in this campus life, yes, I
341 still live that life. I am living in the rank and file area, I have to say. [Laughs] I moved. I moved first from
342 Coombs Court when I first moved in at 2 a.m. The thing I still remember then Lily Martinez hid the key
343 under floor mat for me because my partner at the time, the two of us drove up from Southern California.
344 We drove up and we arrived at 2 a.m. And I said, "Lily, so how can we get into the house?" She said,
345 "Okay, don't worry, Angie, I'll leave the door [key] for you," which she did. And I always remember that
346 wonderful gesture. So we got in at 2 a.m., Coombs Court. Then I moved to Simpson Court for several
347 years.. And then when I went to teach in Viet Nam for one year of Fulbright Scholarship I put all my
348 belongings in huge containers in Seaside. And then when I returned I stayed at Chenault, which is another
349 very important name for history: General Chenault (during World War II). I stayed at Chenault for seven
350 years. Then I met Joe in the Library. He was a night supervisor in the library. And then we got together and
351 we moved together into another place on campus. So yeah, I was moving around. But the point to be said
352 here about what I am happy about, I am happy to say that it's very important to totally immerse oneself,

353 immersing oneself in the campus life. The campus community. To do that and to be so close to campus is a
354 blessing. And I really, I really am enjoying that.

355 **[45:04]** Disappointments? I think that I sprinkled that throughout the talk. The lack of support.
356 Slowly to see some of that [change] but I think that is an area that needs more attention and needs
357 improvement, support in scholarship. Recognition for and the support of doing regular research is very
358 important. It's very important to sustain good professors because good professors need to do research to
359 stay up to date with the literatures while contributing to them. So I think that's a work in progress right
360 there. I applaud the ongoing effort [on campus]. You know, the Showcase of Scholarship next month,
361 which is good but more needs to be done. In addition to just showcasing books, articles, and poster boards
362 we need more faculty presenting their works in depth. In depth lectures. Talks. Panels. That kind of thing.
363 Like what we are doing in our Brown Bag series in CAHSS. So that's another thing that can be improved.

364 Work load, yeah. That is related to that as well. Finding innovative ways to recognize and support
365 faculty who like to do regular research. For example, I heard the former Provost saying that she would find
366 ways to give credit, release time for faculty to do scholarship. That had not happened, has not happened so
367 I am hoping that the new provost will find ways to do that. For example, faculty can teach overload in some
368 years, banking up credit hours, for some subsequent semester where he or she can take off and do good,
369 bona fide, justified research projects. That's my thought on that.

370 **Benmayor:** Very good, very good. Well, Angie, is there anything else that you'd like to add that I
371 haven't asked about that you feel is important from your experience?

372 One thing that I miss and that may not happen just due to the nature of this whole, I don't know if
373 it's even PC to say this, this whole neoliberal mindset, that in the past I had fantastic activist students who
374 were very keen on having student run cafeteria. Student run, like co-ops. And they participated in contract
375 negotiations. That was Sodexo time right before this A'viand now. So they succeeded in shortening the
376 contract period for Sodexo, in a sense shortening the monopoly of Sodexo back then. Still their hope back

then was to do a student run cafeteria. Where you go to any big campus, UC, UCSC whatever, you have these food courts. The nature of the students that they graduated they left. So the activists, the leaders left. When the leaders left the remaining students didn't pick up the pieces. I won't blame the students because it's just the nature of transformation, of progress, things move on. But to me, I really miss the sense of students activism on issues that affect their lives. I know that the SQE students are wonderful. Students for [49:25] Quality Education. It's very progressive liberal students. In collaboration with CFA as well. I'm hoping that they will pick up these struggles to somehow seize back things that affect their lives. So that's one thing. Oh, there is one more thing that I really miss, you know, International Women's Day organized by student clubs that showcased women's lives, women's struggles, women's victories internationally. I don't see that now. So maybe I'm too old. I'm just reminiscing here. But yeah.

Benmayor: So you are seeing a different cohort of students. Is that it?

Tran: Yes. Yes, I see different cohorts. No judgment here whatsoever. It's just for me because I've been here for 23 years, I've seen a lot of things. These are things that I miss. So I'm just reminiscing. I'm just reminiscing. But the student empowerment is something that, in whatever facets that is important to them – I would support that. Yeah.

Tran: Written Addendum: *I just remembered one special experience that is so UNIQUELY CSUMB! I was very honored to receive the President's Faculty award in 2000. Nowhere in any other university would I be able to stand in front of an audience of thousands (students and their families, faculty, staff, administrators, guests, etc.) and to start my address in Vietnamese and sing a Buddhist song in Vietnamese. It was such a heartfelt and moving experience. I'm very proud of that award and so were my parents! In almost every commencement (if I was not on leave or overseas doing research or on the Fulbright year), I am always thrilled to contribute the Vietnamese greetings to the multi-lingual welcome at the beginning of the Spring commencement.*

406 **Tran:** Well, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to reflect, and to express, and to
407 contribute to this very meaningful project. And as you know, I love history. I love history. So that's why
408 this project is very – I am a little bit emotional now --, but it's very near and dear to my heart. This is where
409 I grew up. This is the one last point I want to say, that as you know my history, right? Fresh out of graduate
410 school, coming here, this place is where I grew up intellectually, culturally and a sense of being an
411 independent woman. So all kinds of intersectional analysis I can bring here. Race, class, gender. I
412 developed that kind of consciousness here. Not at USC.

414 **Tran:** Yes, yes. Because of you all. You all. By working with you all and seeing that you are
415 walking the talk. You really are making a living statement. You guys are good role models for me to see
416 that, hey, we can be good activists, scholars and teachers. Look at them. Strong women!

418 (END OF RECORDING)